




NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 3 – April 2011

A motorboat with a wooden cabin and a blue handrail is docked on a riverbank. The boat is the central focus of the cover, with its cabin and engine compartment visible. The background shows a calm river and green foliage. The text is overlaid on the right side of the boat.

THE SHOW'S IN TOWN
The NABO Road Show in Yorkshire

MOORING STRATEGIES
An Olympian struggle on the Lee and Stort

RICHLOW GUIDES
A guide to publishing a guide

IS IT COLD IN WINTER?
This most common question is answered

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Table of Contents

- 4 Editorial
- 5 Cost of boating survey
- 6 Chairman's column
- 9 Notes from Council Meeting
- 10 NABO Road Show hits town

News

- 12 Petition on licence fee increases
- 14 Caption competition
- 15 Online forums

Features

- 16 Writing a Richlow guide
- 18 Council member profile
- 20 Continuous cruiser's winter boating experience

Talking points

- 22 Fishermen on visitor moorings
- 24 Lee & Stort local moorings strategy
- 28 Bluff or double bluff?
- 29 Simon Robbins on Continuous Cruising
- 31 Robin Evans blogs about BW property
- 34 Letters to the editor

Contributions

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images and photos in JPEG format please.

Contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk

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Please email or post your contributions by:
23rd April, 18th June, August 13th,
December 3rd

Front Cover Photo Competition

Win yourself a year's free membership by sending us an image for the front cover of the new NABO News! In the first instance please send a low resolution JPEG by email. The photo should ideally be portrait format with the main action in the centre so that we can print text at the top and bottom, with a width of at least 1800 pixels.

This month's cover photo is of Kesho, possible victim of this year's licence increases (see letters page)—photo by Ern Lawrence.



NABO Calendar 2011

Council Meetings in 2011

Saturday April 16th

Saturday June 11th

The Council has agreed a break in the middle of the summer as most members are cruising.

Saturday September 3rd

Saturday October 15th

AGM November 12th (Venue to be arranged)

New Council meet Saturday November 26th

The venue as usual is the Waggon and Horses at Oldbury. Remember that members are welcome to attend meetings—just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance, contact details opposite.

NABO News is published by the **National Association of Boat Owners**

FREEPOST (BM8367), Birmingham B31 2BR Editor: Peter Fellows

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Every little helps

This month's pot pouri of offerings, introduced by **Peter Fellows** reminds us that NABO can only thrive with the input of its members and that its influence will increase in proportion to its membership

First of all, thank you to everyone who has written to comment favourably on the new design and my apologies for the small print size in the last issue—teething problems, but no excuses and I hope this is easier to read.

NABO meets with Defra

The big news continues to be the new waterway charity (NWC) and the progress by Defra reported in the Chairman's column. Although he is too modest to say so himself, Pseudonym reports David's meeting with Defra and his involvement with the NWC advisory panel.

These are not only important for the future of the waterways but also recognition of the importance that the government attaches to NABO's views among the many waterway groups. The NWC will need volunteers and so does NABO, and there are many ways that you could help: you could think about offering to join the Council, or if this is too

big a jump, spend a Saturday seeing what happens at the next Council meeting. If this is too much of a commitment, you could recruit the next non-member boater who ties up next to you. As some advertising agency once said to a supermarket chain: 'Every little helps'!

The membership form will not be included in every issue after this one, so please make use of it (it is of course also available on the NABO website and I will include it at intervals in future issues). I've heard that only a small percentage of boaters are actually aware of the different boating organisations and most have only a vague idea of what's happening with the NWC. The more members that NABO has, the greater the Association's influence over the forthcoming changes and a larger number of boaters will be better informed.

Mooring consultations and continuous cruising (or continuous mooring) are in the news again, but this month the focus has shifted from the K & A to the River Lee. In addition to David's update in the Chairman's column and his article, Simon Robbins has contributed his personal view on issues around continuous cruising and John Slee describes his experiences as a continuous cruiser frozen in for several weeks last winter.

Boater's feedback

Surprising as it may seem to some, Council members are actually human and have their own life stories to tell: this month it is Howard Anguish's turn and what a fascinating life afloat he has led, with a wealth of experience that NABO

The River Lea in Hackney
Photo by Matt Horgan



can really benefit from. Another issue that has raised its head over the last month is fishermen on visitor moorings and I have included correspondence from member Geoff Wood with BW. Is this a widespread problem?—Let me know if you have had similar experiences. Thank you also to those of you who have written in with comments on Simon Greer's views in the last issue; as well as Mike Rodd for setting the record straight following my article on the K & A, and Sue Burchett for her somewhat controversial proposal.

I am thinking of introducing a few new features to the newsletter, including upcoming waterway group or society events, reviews of books or DVDs that you think other readers might like and a spot for members to advertise boating equipment for sale or wanted. Please let me have your contributions to any of these, and also let me know if there is something else you would like to see in the newsletter.

My request for humorous contributions has yet to draw out your comic potential, but I needn't worry because the BBC has beaten you to it! For those who have so far missed it, I recommend you tune in to 'The Boat That Guy Built' on BBC1 running until April (or on BBC iplayer). It purports to show the renovation of neglected narrowboat 'Reckless' by TT champion racer Guy Martin

as he equips it with inventions from the Industrial Revolution. No doubt the programme's focus on historical inventions is worthy, but the boating aspects are laughable: in the first episode he appears to be able to hop from Worsley to the Black Country Living Museum, and then in no time at all he is on the T&M at the Wedgewood factory in Stoke—all by boat and without any apparent effort! Lighting a fire on the roof to brew his tea and routinely crashing into moored boats also seem to be part of normal boating on the programme. However, he seems to portray boating as an enjoyable way of getting around and I guess we should welcome anything on TV that promotes the waterways in a favourable light.

The Boat that Guy Built, is Guy safer on dry land?



NABO annual cost of boating survey

In April, NABO will be inviting members and non-members to take part in our annual on-line Cost of Boating Survey. Please have a look on our web page and click on the Survey link. It won't take you as long as the Census to fill in and it gives us an important view of the way that boating costs are rising.

This enables us to provide poten-

tial boat owners with a feel for the cost of owning a boat, as well as informing Council so that we can speak knowledgeably when talking to navigation bodies. If you haven't done this before, please do it this time. If you have done it in the past, it would be very helpful if you could do it again this year.

Interesting times

As always, there is plenty happening on and surrounding our beautiful canals and rivers writes Chairman **David Fletcher** as he examines some of the live issues and challenges exercising boaters this spring.

The NWC story continues with the Minister's announcement on the last day of February that EA waters will not immediately join the charity, and even then after further review. I am relieved at this decision, not because I don't think it should ever happen, but because now is the wrong time. A fledgling organisation needs time to get up and running and have some solid successes behind it before we can deal with long-term ideals. We can now all get on and focus on the immediate issues to support the set up of the new bodies and drive for success. Last month I reported that applications were to be invited for interim trustees. The application period was very short, but I understand that around 90 were received. This is a good number and should enable the appointments panel to make up a team with a range of all the important skills, like helming, getting off the bottom, clearing the prop, stopping at the pub and perhaps even fishing? We await the outcome with interest. My application has been politely declined. I don't expect that those with user experience will be able to supply the skills need to run this venture, but I do not think that a bunch of experts with a dearth of towpath knowledge can run it either. And the very good news is that BW now has a ready-made list of 86 other people ready to volunteer their skills to support the charity. What will they do to make sure they all get involved to help? I wish we had new 86 volunteers to help with NABO.

DEFRA now has to formally consult on the issues around the

NWC. I understand that the launch date has slipped a bit, but hopefully we will see it in April. The main issues burning for me are around the level of the grant, the period of the contract, the pension liability and the directors' pay. But if we were to concentrate on these alone, it would be a disappointment. I have no doubt the consultation will seek views on the many aspects of the way the charity is set up and how the controlling bodies are chosen. It is very important that we get this right, and take up as much experience as possible from similar organisations. The bodies will be both national and local, so there is much to think about and contribute to. The local bodies or partnerships trial started on the K and A last year, and is to be extended this year, with interim groups in the Midlands and the North West. And those four main issues? Well the time to roll that out is when the interim trustees are in place. Then they will need all our active support to do the final deal with the Treasury.

Local Moorings strategy

The local moorings strategies took a leap forward in March with the roll-out of a consultation for the Lee and Stort area. There are many implications of this both locally and nationally, and there is a separate article elsewhere in this issue. Ultimately I can see a similar neighbourhood approach being taken elsewhere where canal-side moorings are in high demand and these are to some degree blocked. Pricing is an effective support to enforcement. You may not be on the Lee, but this is-

sue does matter for all boaters, and I ask that you read the proposals, consider the implications and write to NABO and/or respond to the BW consultation. The only way that this will work is when the majority of boaters agree to the spirit and the need for what is intended.

Of course the ultimate idea is get boats moving, but this is to be done by setting the rules so that those who stay for longer than 7 days have to pay £20 a day for the privilege. Now I don't know any boater ready to part with a bunch of twenties for something they are used to getting for free, much less pay over £7000 pounds for a mooring without security or facilities. So there is going to be much wailing and gnashing of teeth, but in the end, I think that most boaters will comply and avoid payment. As always a few will object and ultimately fall foul of the enforcement process. But the result will be movement in the areas to enable all to enjoy the waterway. I do fail to see how 7-day moorings help the true cruiser or hire boater who really wants 24 or 48 hours. I am weary of hearing about the human rights of one group or another, when what I hear is 'my rights' before 'your rights'. I much prefer equal rights, and equal responsibility. But then I always was a bit trusting and naive.

Watford observer

I am concerned about the outcome of the BW licence consultation and the plan to revert to the historical high pricing of the 3- and 6-month periods. I do think this is a mistake. The change was made a few years ago to encourage new users, and the reasons for stopping this I find unconvincing and unsympathetic with user needs.

Internal issues

There has been a whole sequence of negative comments on one of the popular online forums about how we operate, our inclusivity, and the way we present ourselves. Generally

we don't respond to blog gossip because it can have the effect of making things worse. However, on at least one occasion in the last month we responded at length to put the record straight, and acknowledged the valuable points that have been raised. Also we have written to the individual forum members to understand the complaints and engage in meaningful dialogue. None of them have responded. To avoid any doubt, I say again and again that I welcome any constructive criticism and suggestions, just as I welcome offers of help. If you are not happy with what we do, please write and tell us, or even better, come and help fix it. There are many tasks that we would like to undertake, both frontline and administrative, either travelling or from home. Please give us a few hours to make a contribution.

Feedback and publicity

Your Council frequently talk about how we get feedback from members and how our messages are justified and presented to both members and the wider waterways public. Last year we did a couple of surveys and a major overhaul of the website, and started regular news items to keep you informed. Then we made changes to the style and format of NABO News to give it a fresh look, and also sought to publish a wide range of views. You will see that we continue to experiment to make further improvements in style and presentation. One feature that we have not continued is the irregular Chair's e-mails. Only a small number of members received these because it required members to request it, and many addresses became inoperable. Also we were unable to make a link between the distribution and those who were no longer members. It requires considerable extra effort to do this, when we are concentrating on the website and NABO News. If you miss the emails and find it inconvenient to access the website, it is quite pos-

Chairman's Column

sible to receive the content using a modern mobile phone via RSS feeds or Facebook. We will continue to work to improve our communications and public relations, and we all welcome your comments and suggestions. This next month will see a new venture in the road shows at boat clubs, aimed at raising the profile of the issues around the NWC, and of course to get our name out there to new members. A report of the first one held at Thorne Cruising Club is in this edition. However, we still need to work at getting new members to make NABO's voice heard..

LPG Safety and refilling bottles

To close, I must mention something that I heard from BSS sources. It

concerns reports of boaters refilling small LPG containers from larger bottles to save money. As someone who has worked in the oil industry for 40 years and seen many gas fires and explosions, I am horrified by this.

There are too many dangers to list here, to the individual and anybody or anything nearby. If you are tempted to do this, please don't. If you hear of or see somebody doing it, please report it to BW. It is not just like handling red diesel—it is dangerous to do and it is dangerous to use canisters refilled in this way.

Finally

I wish you a happy Easter and look forward to seeing you on the canals and rivers.

Canal Lock Usage 2010**Down**

Caldon -18%
Coventry & Ashby -8%,
Stratford -9%
Chesterfield -26%
Trent & Mersey -8%,
Montgomery -8%,
Macclesfield -18%
Peak Forest -4%,
Rochdale -15%
Lancaster -12%
Leeds & Liverpool -27%,
Lee & Stort -14%
Regents Canal -14%,
Grand Union -5%
Worcs & Birmingham -4%
Fazeley -21%
BCN -13%.

Up

Kennet & Avon +1%
Shropshire Union +1%
Oxford +2%
Llangollen +4%
Staffs & Worcs +1%.

The rivers

Trent -17%
Ouse -19%
Fosdyke & Witham -22%,

*The other canals and rivers are not recorded.

It's official—boating is in decline

Reports **Allan Richards** in *Narrowboat World*

www.narrowboatworld.com March 29th

Following the news of a fall in visitor numbers to British Waterways' canals and rivers in 2010, reports that there is now news that boating is also in decline.

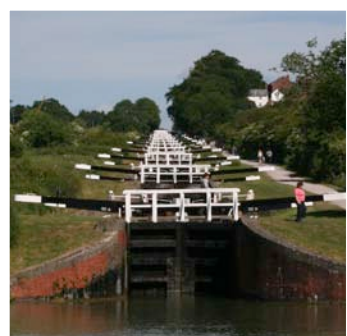
A leaked report, written by BW's Adam Comerford, Group Hydrology Manager, states that lock usage in 2010 fell by 7% against 2009 figures. BW's 2010 annual lock usage report blames the decline on restrictions and closures in the summer and the cold weather conditions at both the start and end of the year, but ignores other possible causes such as rising boating costs, stagnating licence numbers and the high number of boats 'for sale'.

The only waterways showing an increase in numbers were the Kennet and Avon and North Wales and Borders.

Unsurprisingly, bearing in mind BW's inability to keep the Leeds & Liverpool Canal open, North West waterways suffered a drop of 27%. However, it is the figures for the Lee

& Stort that stand out in the report. With BW claiming that the number of boats on that waterway has risen by 40% over the last four years, one would have expected the Lee & Stort figures for boat usage to buck the national downward trend and show an increase.

Not so! The new report shows that lock usage on the Lee & Stort fell by 14% in 2010 (and by a similar figure in the London area as a whole).



Notes from Council

Pseudonym gives the low down on last month's NABO Council meeting

The Minutes Secretary knew she was in trouble when she found that she had been given a different agenda to the Chairman and the rest of Council. There were two guests at this meeting, more would be welcome.

The first item for discussion was the problems on the Lee and Stort and BW's handling of them. NABO is advising the newly formed Upper Lea User Group who are trying to get BW to work with them to come to a solution agreeable to all. BW has established that you can CC in 27 miles but as some of the proposed 14-day moorings have concrete towpaths and no means of mooring there are some problems to be sorted. One concession BW has made is to defer the deadline for the consultation until the 9th May, making this now the statutory 12 weeks! Two meetings have been held with approximately 200 people attending at each. There is talk of social cleansing because of the Olympics and it is believed BW wants the moorings to make money out of this event. It also has been stated that there will be a three-mile exclusion zone, rumours abound.

The K&A mooring consultation also merited some discussion: Council was told that the committees are now beginning to work better, although there is concern about non-boaters making decisions that will affect boaters, with 'breathing spaces' being chosen that include the best mooring spots.

Some interesting meetings have been attended: Chairman David was invited on a boat trip from Gas Street with three other user group representatives. This was to introduce the advisory panel for the NWC (the provisional name for the

new charity) to the canals. The trip included a walk to a nearby reservoir. With a captive audience, useful discussions took place.

David was also invited, at short notice, to Defra headquarters to give his opinion on the consequences of BW becoming a charity. Defra were told that the lack of a suitable grant and the huge wages of some employees were going to make the charity unviable. Also that NABO has consistently opposed BW taking over the EA navigations.

The current legal case with a K&A boater goes on and on. 31st March is now the date for the judgement.

Adverse publicity was discussed as one boaters' forum gave us a lot of criticism. Luckily a few gave some constructive ideas, which have been taken onboard. More people to help carry the load is the major problem as Council is stretched almost to breaking point.

Stephen reported that financially NABO is healthy.

It was reported that some people were having problems with the website and the membership form isn't displaying. This is being attended to and in the meantime please request a paper copy.

The new editor is doing a grand job including deciphering my witterings, but he won't be including a request for an itinerary of Council's boating from all the members—some of us don't know where we will be boating or when, as Council business has a habit of altering things.

NABO is represented on the Management, Technical and Advisory committees of the Boat Safety Scheme. The solid fuel stove issue hasn't gone away, it is still smouldering.



BW announces a new flexible mooring strategy?

Member's small advert:

Mooring swap wanted from Spring 2012 for 6, 12 or 18 months.

We would like a 60' mooring somewhere in the London area and can offer a 70' mooring in Gnosall on the Shropshire Union.

Please contact:
Barry Wits, nb Hartwell
barry.wits@gmail.com

Nabo Road Show hits town!

Howard Anguish reports on the first of the NABO Road Shows in 2011 from Thorne Cruising Club in Yorkshire.



Road show panel, left to right: Janet Richardson, editor of Towpath Talk; Sean McGinley, BW Manager East Midlands; Trevor Roberts, National Community Boats Association and Howard Anguish, Vice Chairman of NABO.

On Sunday 20th March, the first of the NABO Road Shows took place at the Thorne Cruising Club in the small town of Stainforth, South Yorkshire. The club is ideally situated alongside the Stainforth and Keadby Canal—part of the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation, and is well known for its eclectic mix of boats and boaters, with members owning boats from small GRP cruisers and even the odd converted ship's lifeboat, through the more conventional narrowboats, to the rather larger ex-Yorkshire keels and wide vessels.

It was understandable, I suppose, that because this was the first of these events and it was held away from what could be described as the heart of inland boating country, the attendance was small; but the quality of interest and the exchange of views between the audience and the panel certainly made up for this. In addition to members of the Thorne Cruising Club there was also a small contingent from Strawberry Island

and I hope that everyone who took part found it worthwhile.

Ably chaired by the man with the mike, our General Secretary Richard Carpenter, the meeting considered a number of topical issues relevant to the future viability of the waterways. Richard steered the meeting through three key issues, which affect the waterways in the years to come.

Aspects of volunteering.

The impact on regular BW staff with regard to job reductions, and safety and operational issues relevant to maintaining standards and operational viability. Issues of health and safety and the training of volunteers before being let loose on their section of the waterway, and the need to remember that volunteering should not be restricted to physical jobs. Not everyone is able (or willing) to wield a pick and shovel, but there are many other ways where volunteers can assist BW or its successor to maintain and improve the waterway environment. Brains as well as brawn are available if needed! Aspects of volunteering were not, however, limited to maintaining the waterway infrastructure, as Trevor Roberts was keen to mention: there are benefits to the individual volunteers with particular regard to involvement of young people and offenders in community projects.

Licensing issues

With particular regard to evasion and enforcement, this led to a lively debate concerning so called continuous moorers, bridge hoppers and those who wished to get the most out of their use of the canal while

not contributing their fair share towards the upkeep of the system. I'm sure that Sean noted some of the strong opinions expressed by those boaters attending the meeting and we are sure that he will pass these on to his colleagues in BW.

New Waterway Charity

The change is now underway which should hopefully be in place by April 1st 2012, although it was mentioned that perhaps the date should be delayed until April 2nd to avoid any sense of an April Fools spoof!

We were very fortunate to have Sean on the panel in his capacity as a BW Manager and he gave an extremely lucid explanation of exactly how the NWC will be structured, with a timetable of when each element should be in place. He explained the structure and aims of the local management panels which will be set up for each of the eleven BW regions and I am sure his explanations helped to clear up miscon-

ceptions that may have been held by those present at the meeting.

I think everyone who attended thought that it had been worthwhile and it has given Richard some ideas about how he will present the other Road Shows that are planned. The next two at Byfleet and at Pewsey Vale will have been and gone when this edition is published, but more are planned for later this year. Look out for news of one near you. NABO is always anxious to hear the views of members and this is the best way that we can properly represent you in national and local issues that may affect your favourite waterway.

Finally, many thanks to the other members of the Panel—Janet, Sean and Trevor—for giving up a precious Sunday afternoon; to Thorne Cruising Club for their very kind hospitality and for making us feel welcome; and especially to those who made the effort to come and take part.

Government statement on transfer of waterways into new waterways charity

On 28th February, the Government announced its preference for a phased transfer of state-owned waterways in England and Wales into the planned new waterway charity, with British Waterways' canals and rivers moving in 2012 and the EA navigations in 2015. The decision is intended to ensure that sufficient funding can be found to enable the charity to take on the liabilities associated with the EA navigations from the start of the next Spending Review.

BW Chairman, Tony Hales welcomed the Government's continued commitment to the planned 'national trust for the waterways' and hoped the EA navigations may be able to benefit in the future. Although he thought there would

be some who are disappointed by the decision not to include all waterways from the outset, he appreciated the Government's caution in ensuring the considerable issues of financial sustainability for the EA navigations are to be fully addressed. Consultation begins in April and Defra has started the process of appointing an Advisory Panel on First Appointments and Transition to provide advice to Ministers and advertising for 'Transition Trustees' who are due to be appointed in April. Setting up the new charity will be enabled by the passage of the Public Bodies Bill through Parliament later this year and it is expected to be up and running by April 2012, subject to Parliamentary time and consent.

Petition on licence fee increases

Richard Carpenter explains NABO's online petition to protest the short term licence increases introduced by British Waterways that threaten to drive yet another section of boaters from the canals

Despite the fact that the results of a consultation process have not been made known and their press release on 25th November talked about a 'proposed' increase, BW have published the new licence fees for April 2011. The new figures include raising the three- and six-month licences from 35% and 60% of the 12 month rate, to 60% and 80%. This is a draconian increase of some 50%! BW's excuse for making this increase is to reduce licence evasion. It also states that this is not a real price increase as 'it is now proposed to revert' to the 60% and 80% ratios which were decreased experimentally some time ago. How long ago is disputed. However there are many boat owners who genuinely and legally only need a 6-month licence (see letters page). Those who moor off BW waters, trail boaters, and visitors from waterways owned by other authorities will all be hit by this increase. George Cutting of the New Stort Boat Club has raised a petition to protest about these increases. He says: "If your members wish to object to these crippling increases I urge them to support the on-line petition at www.petitions24.com/british_waterways_licence_fee_petition

Recent on-line petitions appear to be influencing the EU fisheries policy in respect of the practice of 'discard', and another influenced the British Government enough for them to drop the proposed sale of our forests." He adds: "Signing up may not change this ludicrous situation but will at least record the depth of feeling against these unrealistic fee increases."

Once again it would seem that

BW has implemented 'proposals' without following or listening to their legally obligated consultation process. NABO Council is very concerned about this and we will be demanding answers. Meanwhile we urge NABO members to add their support to this petition.

The petition reads in part: "The purpose of this petition is to challenge British Waterways recently increased 6-month & 3-month river licence fees to circa 80% of the annual fee, and request they return to the pro rata charging basis on the grounds the increases are both excessive, discriminatory & undemocratic because existing licence holders were not consulted despite a BW mission statement to the contrary when they could have been as BW hold existing customer contact details. This level of increase is unprecedented across any UK business & is excessive, unfair and unacceptable & is likely to drive many boaters off the waterways.

Why should there be a difference between 1 x 12 month licence, 2 x 6 month licences & 4 x 3 month licences providing the full fee for the period required is paid? BW Have seemingly made a mistake, which they now wish to correct by heavily penalising those boaters who genuinely want a short-term licence, to cover the financial shortfall in revenue from boaters they cannot collect the correct fees from because their systems are out of date & they don't have the resources to enforce licence evasion.

BW say there was a consultation on this subject although seemingly neither explorative, open or transparent resulting in some 35,000 licensed boat owners being

both ill informed & not consulted before the release of the document entitled Boat Licence Changes 2011. Ever mindful of the Defra budget cuts the customer cannot absorb all the financial shortfall so we the undersigned call upon BW to manage their business in a more cost effective manner and return immediately

to the pro rata basis of charging for short-term licences. We also call upon BW to address licence evasion in a more pro-active manner rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' approach, which not only risks losing customers but unjustly penalises their existing customer base of short term licence holders."

Loch Lomond navigation chart withdrawn

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park has been forced to pulp a newly-issued navigation chart to the loch after a furious reaction by local people.

The chart is the first re-issue since Victorian times and covers one of the most popular and heavily used waterways in Scotland. The problem has arisen over renaming of some of the landmarks on the loch, many of which were named after the original surveyors on board HMS Porcupine in 1861. While features such as Otter Spit remain, named after the ship's captain, a sandy beach on Inchmoan Island has been renamed Giro Bay—a slang term for unemployment payment—after repeated instances of youths littering the area with rubbish after all-night parties.

A local councillor said: 'Calling it Giro Bay is dreadfully offensive to people who are unemployed.' Other

landmarks have been renamed after national park staff, including Archibald Abyss after the manager of the park rangers, and another as Cameron's Shallows after another staff member. A local boat owner commented: 'Naming landmarks after staff is a bit megalomaniac. Local people are actually very annoyed about it.' Critics also complain that the changes could cause confusion and delays to rescue craft that could be fatal. The national park has now withdrawn 3000 copies of the chart for pulping and will amend and reprint it. *Reported in The Guardian, 10.3.11*



Cruising Council

Many Council members will be afloat over the coming months and look forward to meeting you. Look out for Stephen Peters on the River Severn in *Natterjack*, John Slee in the South East aboard *Epiphany*, Howard Anguish in the Midlands on either *Inglewood* or *Winthorpe*, David Fletcher along the T&M aboard *Water Avens* and Louis Jankel on *Madam* around Oxford and the Thames.

Crick Boat Show

This year's dates are Saturday 28th, Sunday 29th and Monday 30th May. NABO is attending and the stand will be manned by NABO Councillors, but we are very keen to have a few volunteers to help out for a couple of hours to give us a break.

We will have free entry tickets for those that can commit to help. Please contact Richard Carpenter gen-sec@nabo.org.uk.

Spring on the waterfront



More Information;

www.visitliverpool.com/site/whats-on/search/spring-on-the-waterfront-p262801

www.liverpoolonthewaterfront.co.uk/spring/

Some of you may have read that the Liverpool Boat Show was cancelled—it was—the commercial organisation employed to set up and run it did pull out! However thanks to some sterling never-say-die work by Mike Carter and others at the Historic Boat Owners Club and the IWA, he has persuaded Liverpool City Council to help provide facilities for a marquee on the Quayside at Gower Street, which will allow much of the programme to go ahead.

It takes place from 29th April to 8th May in the magnificent surroundings of the Albert, Salthouse and Canning Docks—the largest collection of Grade I listed buildings in Britain. The IWA, the Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club, the

National Waterways Museum and the Steam Boat Association are joining forces to create an interactive celebration of inland waterways during the period. Two separate flotillas of some of the UK's finest examples of historic narrowboats and steamboats will grace the Salthouse Dock.

There will also be a display of Tall Ships plus legendary yachts including the Americas Cup Challenger 'Sceptre'. The exhibitors in the marquee will include all the above and a display manned by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Society charting the history of the Canal. NABO will also have a small presence although the event is essentially for the general public. Entry will be free to the marquee.



Caption competition

Can you suggest a caption for this month's photo?

Thank you to those who sent in captions for the photo in the last issue. This month's photo is by Peter Fellows. All printable entries please to NABO News at nabonews@nabo.org.uk by April 23rd and the best ones will be included in the next issue. Please let me have your photos to use in future caption competitions.

The three best from last month;

'I can reach the bottom, it must need dredging'.

'If we all pull together, there's a plug down here we can get out'

'I know where that mobile went'.



Online Forums

NABO took a bit of a battering in the last month on one of the internet forums dedicated to canals, **Richard Carpenter** examines the good and the bad of the issues raised.

The problem with online forums is, you can't see the whites of the eyes' is a well-known quotation from an unknown quarter. However it is very true that what is written in a forum, or even in an email or letter for that matter, can easily be misread, misunderstood and misquoted. Something said in jest can appear to be very hurtful. A chance flippant remark can be taken as gospel. An observation or a joke can become a personal insult. Contributors can pretend or appear to be what they are not. Worse, statements can be made and read as if they were from informed parties, yet they can be totally untrue. Often things are said from behind a keyboard that would never be said face-to-face. They can result in a demented defensive discourse or even a diatribe of disbelief. However, if said in a pub, perhaps over a pint, when facial expression, body language, context and atmosphere are all taken into account, they would be greeted with just a friendly grin.

However, forums are not all bad: in a recent lengthy exchange discussing NABO in the **canalworld.net** forum several useful suggestions were made by non-members. Some have already been implemented. The NABO constitution is now available on the website with access for all readers and the NABO News archives will also be made available to the general public. The site will be updated more frequently.

One small error was pointed out. Under membership categories, it stated that NABO membership was open if 'you are the owner of any sort of boat on the inland canals,

ivers or Broads of the UK.' That is not quite true according to our constitution, which states 4.2.(a) that membership is open to 'a person who owns a vessel capable of use on Britain's inland waterways'. Not quite the same thing.

Democracy and NABO Council

The accusation that NABO is not democratic and that the Council is a clique was a little unfair. The democratic process works through our regional representatives. However the point was taken that maybe it should be easier for individual members to reach their reps or Council members. Would a members only forum that Council and regional reps read regularly on the NABO website be helpful in this respect? Let us know and we will set one up.

Despite the tone of the recent exchanges about NABO on **canalworld.net**, we have had a few more applications for membership. Whether this is as a result of reading the forum, who knows, but in the world of publicity, even a bad press can get good results sometimes.

Online ongoing

NABO greatly appreciates the considerable work John Slee has put into improving and upgrading our website. The aim was to have a presence in the modern environment, which meant a bigger input on the web and embracing the various ways of communication—we will be Facebooking and Tweeting too—watch out! Please log on regularly and contribute if you can.



Have your say; a plethora of internet forums are dedicated to boating issues

Writing a Richlow Guide

Fiona Slee goes boating with Christine Richardson and takes a masterclass in the writing and production of a canal guidebook

Other guides in the Richlow Series

Lincolnshire Waterways

by John Lower and Christine Richardson
Covering the Fossdyke, River Witham, Witham Navigable Drains, Sleaford Navigation, the Horncastle Canal. And a new addition, the Black Sluice Navigation (South Forty Foot Drain). Published 2008, but kept up to date.

Chesterfield Canal

by John Lower and Christine Richardson
A guide for all users of this waterway. A new edition in 2008, and kept up to date. Now with re-designed maps to match our other guides.

Narrowboat on the Trent

by John Lower.
Published August 2007, but kept up to date.

South Pennine Ring - Part 1

by John Lower.
Covers the entire Rochdale and Ashton canals. Published January 2010 and kept up to date.

South Pennine Ring - Part 2

by John Lower. Published January 2011.
Covers the entire Huddersfield Narrow and Broad canals, the connecting parts of the Calder & Hebble and, for completeness, the Halifax Canal (Hebble Trail).

More information
www.richlow.co.uk

A chance meeting on the Chesterfield Canal in August 2010 led me to a 'winter project' for when we cut down on our cruising to accommodate the weather. Christine and Malcolm Richardson had been following our blog www.nbepiphany.co.uk and met up with us at Drakeholes Tunnel. Christine, a published author and expert on canal history, is one half of 'Richlow' who publish guides to the North East waterways. With her business partner John Lower, Richlow is proud to declare that their guides are "written by people who go there".

Christine and Malcolm kindly lock-wheeled for us down the canal to Stockwith where we all had a cuppa and a chat. Some time later a phone call came asking whether I would be interested in writing a Richlow Guide covering the North Yorkshire Waterways. We were classed as 'people who go there' as we had cruised the Rivers Ouse, Ure and Derwent. We had been right up to the most north easterly point of the inland waterways system—Ripon, at the end of the Ripon Canal—and cruised one of the loveliest restored canals along the navigable four and a half miles of the Pocklington Canal.

We met with John Lower and his wife Barbara while we were on the Trent and Mersey Canal. I was 'approved' and just hoped I would fulfil Chris' confidence in me. John is the map expert and after creating maps for all the guides he really knows his stuff! He has also written articles and some of the guides after cruising the waterways on his narrowboat. Writing a guide is very different to writing a daily blog and I had

to remember that I was writing for boaters who needed information, who might be interested in stopping off to sightsee and who would not want to read screeds about what interested me. Space in a guide is limited and the important things like navigation advice, moorings, boaters facilities, access to towns for supplies and services must be included. Cost of production is also a consideration too and all this must add up to an affordable, informative and interesting read. However I was able to give it some 'informality' and add my own touches.

So I set to, using our blog, photos, maps, articles, research on the Internet and local contacts, boaters and lock keepers to check my facts. The Internet has revolutionised the editing process: my text was emailed to Chris, an experienced editor, who made suggestions, formatted it into Richlow style and returned my words to me as they would look in printed form. John created the maps using my text, our knowledge and various map sources available. Another meeting with Christine and Malcolm at draft stage confirmed the layout and we discussed illustrations and edits. I was excited and a little emotional to hold a draft copy of 'my guide' and to see my name on the front!

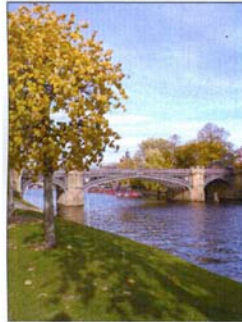
Further tweaks followed, with the guide really coming together with text, photos, information and maps. Finally Chris suggested I might like to see the first copies printed and produced. So I visited the Richlow production office and had a great day with the Richlow Team, even helping with the cutting and binding of the guide. I have the first copy of the first edition, like many

authors, a copy to be treasured! The Guide was registered on the publishing trade website and eventually will be picked up by Amazon. A copy goes to the British Library and can be requested by other national libraries. Richlow print short runs of their Guides so that they can really be kept up to date. The team, boaters who buy the Guides, and local contacts will note changes and these are incorporated in the new print runs. Updates are also available online via the Richlow website so can be available almost as soon as they are known.

You get a copy of the Richlow North Yorkshire Waterways (and other Richlow NE waterway guides) direct from them via www.richlow.co.uk or books@richlow.co.uk. Post and package is included in the price, extremely good value at £7.50. I would really encourage you to include the North Yorkshire Waterways in your cruising itinerary, wherever you are based on the inland system. Arriving by water in York on the River Ouse, exploring the well-kept Ripon Canal, adventuring upstream on the River Derwent and revelling in the peace and tranquillity of the Pocklington Canal are experiences not to be missed.

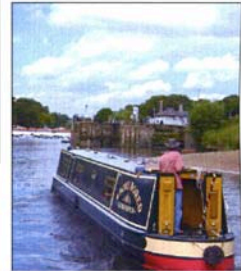
North Yorkshire Waterways

A Richlow Guide



The rivers Ouse, Foss, Ure, Derwent - and the Ripon and Pocklington canals

Fiona Slee



Written by people who go there
www.richlow.co.uk



Howard Anguish

A personal profile of NABO's vice-chairman

Howard gives us an insight into his work as a NABO council member and his earlier life in the lumpy stuff.



Continuing our occasional series looking at the personal stories of NABO Council members, this month it is the turn of Howard Anguish, NABO Vice Chairman. In addition to keeping an eye on North East Waterways he also represents those members who, like him, share their boats with others.

I suppose it was inevitable that canals would feature prominently in my life at some point. I was born within walking distance of the Leeds & Liverpool, not far from Skipton, and I am told that my earliest trips out in the pram were along the tow-path at East Marton and Gargrave. The canal theme continued when we moved to Sowerby Bridge and I can remember fishing for tiddlers at Tuel Lane Bridge at age 5 or 6—long before the present deep lock was even a pipe dream. The final input in my boating enthusiasm came

when living at Yeadon, a small town where the Leeds Bradford Airport is located. This also has a large lake known locally as Yeadon Dam, with a sailing club and rowing boats for hire and I spent most of my time either pestering the boaters to let me have a go or sailing model boats on the lake.

A life in the Merchant Navy

Since an early age I had developed a hankering for the sea, so canal boating was put on hold while I followed my dream: I enjoyed a varied and interesting career as a navigating officer and then master in a variety of ships—cargo vessels, transatlantic passenger ships and roll-on-roll-off container ships—before eventually transferring to specialist anchor handling ships working in the off-shore oil exploration industry.

Continuing the canal theme, however, during my time at sea I was fortunate to travel along many of the world's ship canals such as the St Lawrence Seaway, the Welland, the Cape Cod Canal, the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, the Kiel Canal and the Suez Canal; even the slightly less exotic Manchester Ship Canal. The one that escaped me was the Panama Canal but there is still time! Going to sea was good to me, especially as it even allowed me to meet my wife Hilary, who travelled as a passenger on one voyage, and we have been happily married since 1967. Once the family came along it was time to swallow the anchor, so I took up a shore-based position, firstly as marketing and chartering executive for the same offshore company, before becoming



Operations Manager for a fleet of worldwide deep sea salvage tugs. A number of similar posts followed including running my own marine consultancy company for a few years and then six years as Manager at Hull Marina, a coastal marina with nearly 300 berths and a large boatyard, which was then owned by Hull City Council but is now run by BW.

Inland waters

It was during the late 1970's that the inland waterways became a prominent family interest. Hilary and I had chartered a variety of sailing yachts around the UK coast but when the children came along we thought that we would get them used to being on boats by taking holidays on the canals. We started with a week on the Leeds & Liverpool from Silsden in 1978. Frankly, I wasn't too keen on the idea, thinking that after a lifetime at sea the canals would be very boring and a little bit dull. How wrong can you be! Within a week both Hilary

and I were hooked and we have been involved with the waterways ever since. Initially we hired once or twice a year, and then for the last 13 years we have owned shares in first one and then two narrowboats.

We did consider buying our own boat as I came up to retirement but with other interests and commitments, we have found the two shares give us sufficient canal time to satisfy the urge while not tying up all our cash.

It has been fascinating to get involved with NABO, especially at this time of dramatic change in the waterways. Hilary and I are also committee members of the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society where we are helping to bring this little known gem of a canal into more prominence; Hilary is secretary and I help to man our trip boat 'New Horizons'. We both look forward to the future of the waterways in its new form with optimism but I suspect that there will be many trials and tribulations along the way before the dust finally settles.

Hilary on Winthorpe, South Oxford Canal

Howard Anguish

Vice Chairman
Share Owners
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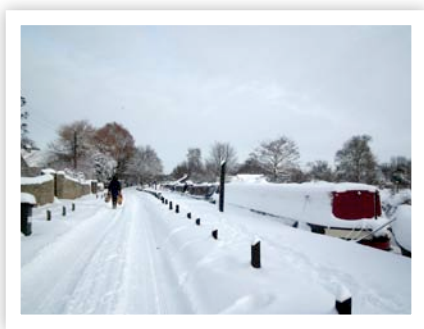
“Is it cold in Winter?”

A continuous cruisers' winter boating experience

John Slee tells the story of a typical boating experience in the winter months when “every gentleman has laid up his yacht” and only the very hardy are still cruising.

There’s ice on the cut”, I exclaimed one morning last November. “We’ll just have to wait until it melts, before we move on. It’ll probably only be for a day or two.” Five weeks later the ice had melted sufficiently for a couple of hire boats to make a channel through. Much more importantly, it gave Mark Boardman, aka Dusty, the opportunity to slowly bring his fuel boat up to supply diesel, coal and gas to his patient customers.

When I say slowly, he probably took five times as long as usual, as he had to go forwards in order to break the ice, then back to take a run at it again, repeating this until he had passed the next customer’s boat, then reversing back against the intended’s side, so as not to damage the boat’s paint-work.



Getting provisions

A matter of fuel

But during a cold spell such as we had this winter, liveaboards like us burned far more coal than usual. Having used up our reserves during the freeze, unable to move, what were we to do? Using our mobile phone we contacted Dusty, who said he would be looking after his usual customers by bringing some down by car and would see if had room for some extra bags for us. He did. As liveaboards we run our engine on a daily basis to keep our batteries

charged. A couple of weeks or so after being frozen in, we decided we ought to top up with diesel. But how to do it? No imminent fuel boat, unable to move to a boatyard, no car—and I doubt we could have ridden on a bus with our jerry can—what to do? Talking to fellow-boaters they offered the loan of an extra four jerry cans and the use of a car to drive to a boatyard to fill up. That kept us going till Dusty’s arrival.

Water water everywhere

But there was one more consumable necessity: water. We were moored near a pub, the Jolly Boatman at Thrupp, and the landlord, Andy, is a boater. “You can fill up from our outside tap, just ask so the staff know what’s happening.” Ideal—the first time—once we had thawed his hose with a kettle and connected it to our hose (carefully kept safe from too much cold)! Next time, “Sorry, the tap is frozen. I’ll let you know when it’s thawed.” He did. Incidentally, on one occasion towards the end of the freeze-in, the local liveboard boaters used ten hoses connected together to top up a series of boats.

In the meanwhile, we surprised ourselves by how little water we could manage with. For example, instead of running the hot tap until the hot came through, we ran it into a jug, which was used in the kettle as required. Washing-up was every other day instead of daily. Showers were replaced by body-washes. As a boater, you may be wondering how we managed pumpouts. We didn’t! We have a cassette toilet and three

cassettes, which is one of the best design features on Epiphany. A lift to the sanitary station was possible once, but on the final time I used our trolley to carry the cassettes to the customer facility, once it had thawed; not an easy walk over half a mile on an icy towpath, but a relief!

Keeping warm the traditional way

There was an associated expense: most evenings we went to the pub to save coal and cassette space! However, the upside was some very pleasurable evenings with other similarly placed boaters.

And there were lots of other positives too: instead of being by ourselves we became part of a community. Walks with dogs; visits to church services; pub quizzes; even shopping trips by bus, and sometimes others' cars, became de rigueur and new friends were made. Existing friends acted as taxis and as opponents to a weekly round of golf—something I hadn't done for years.

Winter cruising

But, we are continuous cruisers and once the thaw arrived—and it took a couple of weeks to thaw even after the ice-breaking hire boaters—we wanted to be off again. Our winter plans had already been dictated to by the winter stoppages; then the



Starting the engine to charge batteries

ice, as well as hospital appointments and other necessities of life, but Oxford was feasible. Going north would have been interrupted by New Year stoppages, one of which was eventually postponed, thus forcing further changes of plan. We had already been to the city by bus, but it was lovely to visit by boat. Talking of buses, we had also taken advantage of them (and trains) to enjoy concerts, a film and museums.

Yes, I did imply we don't have a home mooring. Nor had we booked a winter mooring. Although we spent several weeks on the same 14-day mooring, British Waterways tells boats not to move when the canal is frozen. And despite not moving as fast as during the spring,

The Jolly Boatman and frozen-in boats

summer and autumn, there's still plenty of time for cruising, even in wet weather—after all “there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing,” including boots for the muddy, slippery towpaths. There are also fewer boats on the move, no queues at locks, and plenty of time to enjoy a bit of uninterrupted bird-watching. Oh, and is it cold on a boat in winter? Far from it, it's snug and cosy!!



You can't park that there

Fishermen on Visitor Moorings

Geoff Wood relates his dialogue with British Waterways over this perennial issue that can be the cause of conflict between users of the canals.

The following correspondence is from NABO member Geoff Wood, sent to John Ellis, BW's Fisheries Manager in February and March. The reply from BW basically said that they have no control over fishing on visitor moorings. If you have had similar experiences NABO News would be pleased to hear of them.

For the attention of John Ellis:

We took our boat out over the weekend for a trip to Cosgrove. On arriving at Cosgrove at about 10.00 am last Saturday, 5th February, we found all the visitors moorings being used for a fishing match. There were about 60 anglers split into two groups: the first was from Bridge 65 to Lock 21 (Cosgrove lock). This stretch is designated as 48-hour visitors moorings. The second group were from Lock 21 to Wolverton Aqueduct, which is designated as 14-day visitor moorings. There was one spot above the lock that was not being used, so we managed to moor there for the weekend. If another boat had wanted to stop, there was no room left either above or below the lock on the visitor moorings.

I asked about four or five of the anglers which club was organising the match and they all said they did not know. When I also asked who was in charge, all I got was 'he's somewhere down there mate' pointing towards the lock and the other group. I got the distinct impression that I was being led up the garden path. This is not the first time I have encountered a fishing match here, but on the two

previous occasions I was already moored before the match started. I am a fisherman myself, but I do object to having a fishing match take place on visitor moorings that then prevent boats stopping. I would therefore ask you to look into this incident.

On another subject, when I go boating I sometimes like to fish for a couple of hours in the afternoon but I will not necessarily know if it is a club water with day tickets or not. Has any consideration been given to a fishing permit that could be attached to the boat licence? This would be at an extra cost, but maybe an extra income stream for BW.

Regards, Geoff Wood

Barbara Wilder, BW's Fisheries Co-ordinator replied that visitor moorings are available on a 'first come first served' basis and there are no restriction to the number of boaters or anglers who can use the moorings at any one time. Under the Standard Angling Agreement, clubs are permitted to hold matches for up to 100 anglers without prior arrangement with BW (these are normally held during the winter as 'there are too many boats during the summer months'). She acknowledged that anglers occupying virtually all visitor moorings cause problems for boaters and offered to contact the angling club to request they leave some moorings available to boats during future matches.

With regard to the suggestion for a combined boating licence/fishing permit, she said this would not be practical as fishing permits are

issued by the angling clubs that hold a licence for the fishing rights in a particular area. If it is club water, boaters should pay the bailiff for a day ticket when requested. On an unlicensed waterway, boaters need a Waterway Wanderers permit at a cost of £20 per year, available from John Harding at j.harding048@btinternet.com or by telephoning 01829 732 748.

Geoff had cause to write again in March (noting 'I think the fisherman must wait until I go out boating!').

Dear Mr. Ellis,

Yet again I have been faced with the problem of arriving at visitor moorings only to find that they have been taken over by a fishing match; this time on 27th February in the long pound between Locks 15 and 16 at Stoke Bruerne. This is a designated 24-hour visitor mooring and is equipped with mooring rings. This time it was 14 fishermen who told me which angling club they were from. There was space for one boat near Lock 15, which we managed to get into. The rest

of the moorings were taken up by the fishermen and it presented the same problem as at Cosgrove (if any other boats had arrived they would not get in). This is a very popular place to moor but this problem is becoming a frequent occurrence of late. If you cannot moor in this pound, it means that you have to go down five locks and hope to moor at the bottom. This is very frustrating if you had planned to use either pub at the top for your meal. There seems to be little point in having visitor moorings if they are not available for visiting boats. There are vast stretches of canal without visitor moorings where fishing matches could take place, so why do they persist in using visitor moorings? The situation certainly doesn't make for the best relationship between boaters and fishermen as it usually ends in arguments erupting.

Regards, Geoff Wood

At the time of going to print, Geoff has had a reply from BW, saying it will investigate and respond fully in due course.



Lee and Stort local moorings strategy

David Fletcher examines proposals to create zones along the River Lee to manage the availability of moorings for the benefit of all styles of usage'



River Lee at Amwell

Photo Steve Chilton
www.flickr.com/photos/steve_chilton/2104993923

British Waterways have recently commenced a consultation on the 'Management of Moorings on the Lee and Stort.' Following distribution of the consultation document along the waterway and publication on the website, there have been two very angry public meetings. There is a lot of discussion happening and ongoing preparation for the formal responses. I don't want to give the full outline here, because it is all available on the BW consultation web site. Suffice to say, BW has concluded that the mooring usage has become 'unbalanced and detrimental to many users' and that 'some 160 or so boaters reside on these waterways and depend exclusively on towpath moorings for their stops; they tend to be concentrated in several locations.' BW has said that it is their intent to use price as a tool to limit those without a home mooring in the area. There is also a clear link to the availability of moorings for the Olympics. You

may have seen the recent Guardian article alleging social cleansing.

Nevertheless some believe that there is a problem with towpath overstaying, and there is a general admission from BW that the 14-day rule has not been properly enforced. As a consequence, it is reported that some areas of the towpath are congested by long stayers, and other users are not able to moor. A familiar story, of course, and without denying the problem, there is regrettably little data available to pinpoint the real issues. In BW's own research only a small part of the sightings of boats without home moorings were on visitor moorings and half of these were in one place. There clearly needs to be some research to pinpoint the facts and figures and estimate the affect that the proposals will have. There are other factors on the waterway, such as unauthorised offside moorings, which BW is looking at 'regularising' in the first instance. There are very few residential moorings in local marinas, and notably only one in the recently opened marina at the north end—a collective failure for the waterways and the local council.

BW's proposals

The main proposal from BW is based on management of the 27 miles of river by dividing it into six parts and requiring those without a home mooring who do not want to leave the area to moor equally in each of the six parts (or neighbourhoods) during the year. There will be some restrictions on immediate return to a previous part. Four out of the six neighbourhoods will be

designated 7-days, said by BW to facilitate genuine cruising stop-offs. There is a commitment to enforce the plan with daily towpath observations, but no intention to introducing Roving Mooring Permits.

There are specific local issues about availability of moorings and facilities in each neighbourhood, security, reliability of locks, water levels and so on. The main mooring structure is to be based on 7-day stays and this applies to two thirds of the waterway. There is no mention of other periods although I assume that 14-days remains in force everywhere else. Local boaters tell me that the proposed 7-day zones appear to correspond with the areas where it is currently possible to moor and the rest is impractical for many reasons. Neighbourhoods do need to be defined to ensure adequate moorings and facilities and appropriate consideration for crime and flood levels. Clearly local knowledge is key to getting this right. How would these factors apply in your area?

Remember that a boater on the Lee can buy a rivers-only licence,

and with the suggested scheme, remain on the river without a home mooring. The effect of the proposed strategy is that a boater can moor up, not move and pay a daily charge of £20 by phone and credit card, or comply with the movement requirements, and pay nothing. And of course, many options in between. It is not clear what the payment option is for people without a phone or credit card.

A different approach from the Kennet and Avon

The local mooring strategy on the K & A has been moving towards a definition of neighbourhoods, zones and dreaded breathing spaces for some time, but up until now the degree of movement in the SW has been hard to spot. The Lee proposal makes an immediate jump to hard proposals, and I welcome this style. We do need to get on with this.

So what are the implications for all boaters from this proposal? Most boaters agree that enforcement of the 14-day rule is a prime requirement and indeed in the public meetings for the Lee this

Waltham Forest

Photo Alan Stanton
www.flickr.com/photos/alanstanton/4895541640



Talking Points: Mooring Strategy



River Lee at Springfield

Photo Vivien Thorne
www.flickr.com/photos/vivith/3235211338

was supported. In a perfect world it would not be necessary, but we have to be practical. I think that there is no excuse for not having good enforcement in popular areas where we would all wish to have a share of use. Of course 14-day movement is only the first part: for those without home moorings who want to stay in an area, immediately the question comes how far to move, and then how long before I can return? The 95 Act talks about using “bona fide for navigation throughout the period....” There are many arguments about what is navigation, but setting this aside, we can all imagine that ‘bona fide’ implies good faith in movement and ‘throughout the period’ is clear enough when added to 14 days. The current moorings guidelines state BW’s own invention of ‘significant part of the waterway’ and ‘progressive journey’. We all might have a view on what these mean—answers on a postcard to Sally Ash. But I instinctively dislike any term with an added adjective, because this implies some unstated qualification. What is ‘good’ to

me is not ‘good’ for everybody. Even ‘Good faith’ is subjective and needs some encouragement though enforcement, but I do think many of us can readily identify bad faith with regard to mooring and navigation. But would a Judge agree?

But the new proposals are different from the guidelines and we have something tangible on the table. We might not like some of the details, but we now have a proposal for continuous cruising that we can all understand and discuss, and without the distraction and legal arguments of subjective terms or new conditions like Roving Mooring Permits. And it is much better than the old lock-miles suggestion, though some might say this is pot and kettle. I still think there is an element of a solution looking for a problem.

I conclude from the proposals that BW agrees for the Lee section, that it is possible to comply with the Continuous Cruising guidelines without leaving the waterway. Previous discussion has been around separated waterways like the Lancaster (42 miles, no locks) and the K & A (87 miles 107 locks). With the Lee section being 27 miles and 34 locks, this is a new benchmark. Do we agree that this is appropriate to manage the availability of moorings for the benefit of all styles of usage? What would it mean if this were applied in your area? Is it too short, or too long? For me, the term ‘significant part of the waterway’ is doomed and has no credibility with a benchmark of 27 miles.

Progressive journey?

Then we come to ‘progressive journey’, which is really an attempt to interpret navigation in good faith. Just how far to move has long been an issue and I understand that BW, as a policy, has refrained from telling boaters how far to go because of the accusations of inconsistency and misunderstanding. But it is key for boaters, and that is why

NABO has always supported the XYZ rule in the guidelines and the use of neighbourhoods and some degree of no return. Obviously the neighbourhood needs to be relevant for navigation and resources, and not just a Churchillian carve-up of the countryside. There remains the hotly disputed issue of return to a previous mooring and the intentions of the 1995 Waterways Act. Does the new proposal for the Lee and six neighbourhoods meet a reasonable interpretation of navigation in good faith?

Implications for other boaters

This has all been about those without home moorings but there are implications for others too. Of course the whole BW proposal should be about managing moorings so that they are available for all, and not just a few. A mix of mooring periods and areas are needed, to ensure a turnover of overnight space that itinerant boaters, liveaboards, weekenders and hire boats need. 7-day blanket areas miss the point. There will be implications for those with a home mooring and those who spend some time on the towpath, because the rules will also apply.

As boat numbers continue to grow by some hundreds every year, something has to be done about the popular sites, and mooring strategies are absolutely needed. Liveaboards are very quick to talk of rights and wrongs, and it is true they have a lot at stake, arguably more than other users. Will we be happy to see families put ashore in circumstances where there are no residential moorings and continuous cruising is impractical? We are heading this way. There needs to be a balance of use, and finding that balance is what all this is about. For sure this kind of plan will be required in other areas, and there is a need to be both involved with the local issues and foresee the implications for the rest of the waterways. NABO will be making a response

to the consultation, and this will take national matters as well as local matters into account.

Editor's note

The Guardian article on social cleansing is "House boaters being 'socially cleansed' from Olympics area", March 9th at www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2011/mar/09/houseboaters-socially-cleansed-olympics. You can find Sally Ash's reply and a letter from Simon Richardson on March 12th at www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2011/mar/11/tales-of-the-olympic-towpath. The Guardian subsequently issued a 'clarification' that read 'A story examining proposals to change how long houseboat residents can stay on a particular stretch of the river Lea in east London before paying increased charges carried a subheading that wrongly said "British Waterways to raise fees from £600 to £7,000". The fees are not due to increase. But the old rules that let owners with a £600 a year 'continuous cruising' licence move just a short distance every 14 days without extra charge would go. The new rules would split the length of the river into six zones; every 14 days owners would have to move zones to avoid daily charges that could increase to £7,000 the cost of staying very close to one part of the river'.

Further information is available on the London Boaters' website at www.london-boaters.org

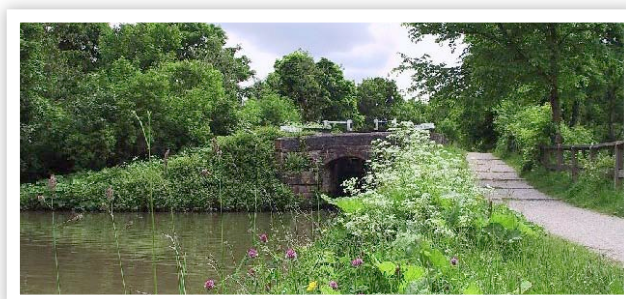
River Lee at Tottenham Hale,
Photo Monkeywing
www.flickr.com/photos/colinsite/2927000531



Bluff or Double Bluff?

Some breathing space in your zone Sir?

Howard Anguish looks at some of the definitions mooted by Sally Ash



Marple Locks
Photo Roger May

In the last edition of NABO News, Geoffrey Rogerson our legal affairs adviser, wrote about a concern that has been raised about so-called 'Breathing Spaces' suggested by BW's Head of Boating, Sally Ash. This proposal is currently being discussed as part of the consultation that is taking place on the K & A in the Local Mooring Strategy pilot scheme, which started earlier this year. Geoffrey expressed the view that this could be part of a hidden agenda to exclude all mooring in particular lengths along a canal, which would certainly be against the concept of freedom to moor in otherwise undesignated areas.

Like many organisations with a common interest, NABO receives copies of newsletters and magazines from like-minded societies and clubs, and this week I got the March edition of 'Buoys Own'—the excellent house magazine of the Black Buoy Cruising Club. I was intrigued to read the following (reproduced by kind permission of the editor, Allan Pickering)

"The NABO News magazine is not noted for its humorous content. Truth to tell it has always been rather on the sombre side. But it

has got a new editor, Peter Fellows, who has announced his intention to introduce some humour. I think he may have got off to a brilliant start. The latest edition is the nearest he can get to the first day of the fourth month. I have not seen any mention of BW 'Breathing Spaces' anywhere else. So, well done Peter; the 'con' was brilliantly conceived and expertly produced. I must confess that you had me fooled—just for a while!"

It's good to see that Peter has been acknowledged for bringing his breath of fresh air attitude to NABO News and long may it continue. However, I'm sorry to have to bring out the wet blanket, but Geoffrey was actually being serious! This contentious idea of breathing spaces was raised by Sally Ash, I understand, as part of the discussions that looked at how to manage those boaters who might be reluctant to move too far, after their stay at a mooring within a designated area had expired. NABO Council has asked for clarification of the term from BW Towers, but so far all we have to go on is the definition as noted at one of the strategy meetings as follows:

Breathing Space—a specific 'no mooring' zone to be established for clear navigational reasons, and potentially for ecological reasons on a pragmatic basis, but specifically not for reducing long lines of moored boats or as an arbitrary restriction.

We still await clarification from BW as to what it really means by this. Maybe BW might consider issuing it on 1.4.11 and then we can congratulate them on a spoof well done. Who knows? Happy April Fool's Day.

As an addendum to Howard's article, other definitions agreed by the last K & A Local Mooring Strategy Steering Group are:

Mooring Zone—an administrative classification of mooring restriction demarcated by signage; it is associated with mooring restriction. (This is different from the use of the term 'zone' in BW's 'consultation' on mooring on the Rivers Lee and Stort).

Place—a geographic context that differentiates one location from the next. For the time being, the definition of the word 'place' in the Mooring Guidance for Continuous Cruisers was accepted.

Continuous Debate

The argument simply won't lie down and die

A personal view by [Simon Robbins](#)

The Continuous Cruising issue just will not go away will it? The correspondence exchange with longstanding member Simon Greer just confirms to me what a thorny issue this remains and that whatever we do, we can't make everyone happy. I rather think that this is the point that people should hold onto. Too many commentators try determinedly to settle the argument into right and wrong when the honest reality is we live in world where too often the truth is a messy shade of grey, sometimes lighter sometimes darker depending on the moment. What I do not think helps any of us, is any attempt to polarise the arguments. I am always suspicious of having arguments which set boater against boater and this is what most perturbs me about the Continuous Cruising debate. There is real bile and hatred apparent in many of the online forums and it concerns me deeply that boaters will speak about other boaters in such a thoughtless and judgemental way.

The ambiguities in the 1995 Act

There was much in Simon Greer's first letter that I personally take no contention with. Simon is quite right to remind us that on the question of Continuous Cruising, the House of Lords committee, albeit now nearly two decades ago, spent many hours and listened to much evidence from all sides of the debate and yet made the recommendations that it did. I also think there is much truth where Simon suggests, 'Smoothing out idiosyncrasies and consistencies is exactly what I was talking about. Doing so just creates more but of a different type.' As I recall this is precisely why the 95

Act contains a certain amount of ambiguity. It was concluded that this was the least worst alternative.

Where I take some difference with Simon is the contention that NABO should leave such matters alone. I can't endorse that and think we have to engage with the debate wherever it arises. Take the issue of the money Council has elected to spend on legal advice over the last eighteen months. I can assure readers this did not start from the perspective of 'a plague on BW'. Rather it arose from a perspective of Council wanting to feel confident—as confident as possible—about what the current legal framework does and doesn't allow. We receive many questions about what BW can and can't do. The BW Acts and other legislation have to remain the touchstone for whatever we say.

It is also pertinent to point out that where we have found actions that BW was trying to pursue which we feel are at odds with the legal framework, we don't simply say to BW, 'You can't change that.' Rather we have consistently said 'you can change that or try that if you want, but here are the risks and problems.' If you simply attempt to 'outlaw' this or that, you will not always make the problem better: instead you just increase the number of outlaws and thereby make as many enemies as friends!

There is much heat and tension over attempts to create moorings strategies on the western Kennet and Avon and the River Lee at present. The one thing that seems to consistently come to light is that in reality it is about people locally getting together and trying to focus on where there is common ground.

Talking Points: Continuous Cruisers

Our experience is that when this is done openly and honestly, solutions do arise, notwithstanding the fact that there will always be some things that people can't come to a settled view over. What matters then is whether we can be mature enough to live with our differences or whether instead, as Simon says in his correspondence, someone has to insist on picking the sore.

If NABO has any major point of contention with BW, I feel that a lot of our criticism of them arises on this last point. There is an obsession in the senior parts of BW with not letting go of the arguments they can't win or resolve easily and that is persistently disappointing and annoying. The current licence fees consultation is an issue that comes to mind: we consulted and debated much of this less than two years ago and yet because BW was not satisfied with the answers, it has come back and asked almost the same

set of questions again. In private, I have made much more specific criticism of some officers in BW, to the effect that they seem to think that by asking the question enough times somehow people will change their view.

I wish that this inability to agree on some things was more often seen as success rather than failure. If we use the outcomes of such debates as a reason to put time and energy into those things we can agree on, rather than as an excuse to keep arguing about the things we don't agree on, maybe there would be the chance of some progress and genuine mutual benefit?

Ultimately however BW sets the agenda on these things and I hope those setting the agenda in BW will think long and hard about whether they are looking at the right things. The agenda at present seems to me to be too often focussed on highlighting difference and contention.

A line of bridges on the Macclesfield Canal, just outside Buglawton near Congleton,
Photo Irene Jameison,
NB Free Spirit



The Family Silver

Commercial property income and waterway maintenance

An extract from BW Chief Executive [Robin Evans](#)' blog of 10 March 2011

I am aware that there has been a lot of comment about our property income and whether we are managing our investments well. I thought it would be helpful to set down how I see it and why property is so important for the future of the new waterways charity. It is a complex subject so apologies if some of the detail is a little dry.

Property provides income

The most important thing to point out is that our property has been and will remain a major source of income for the waterways. Last year many thousands of people signed a petition for the Treasury not to sell our property because they realise how important the income is to waterway funding. Every time the Treasury has thought about selling our property they have concluded that the estate is well managed, gives good value to the tax payer and, importantly, that it should remain with the waterways. In theory the government could replace the income from property with additional grant. However even in better economic times there has never been any indication that government would or could afford to completely replace our property income with sufficient grant or that grant would be as secure or would grow as property income does. One of the many benefits of becoming a charity is that government is gifting all our property to the charity so that it will forever be owned by the waterways for their benefit. That is an extraordinary achievement for the waterways in itself.

When explaining our property performance it is important to distinguish between revenue (usually

what we receive each year by way of rent) and the capital value of property (i.e. what we could sell it for).

Revenue

Our annual gross revenue from our property estate is around £50m. But we also incur significant costs in running and maintaining that estate (i.e. repairs, insurance, rates, staff time). If we take all these costs off the income the net result is around £40m, which is available to spend on the waterways. Generally speaking our property income has held up well in the recession.

Capital

The capital value of a commercial property depends most importantly on the amount of rent payable, the strength of the covenant of the tenant (i.e. how likely they are to trade well and afford to pay the rent) and the potential for future growth. Over the past couple of years capital values have fallen considerably because the weak economy has affected the strength of tenant's covenants and the prospects for growth have dropped dramatically. So the capital value of our property estate has fallen but this has not significantly affected our revenue. Revenue is more important to us as this is what we spend on waterways not capital. Generally we only sell a property because we think we can get more revenue from investing the receipts in other property. So we almost never use sale receipts to fund works on our waterways but reinvest by buying another property and getting more rent. It is important to emphasise both these points because often we are accused of losing money that could otherwise

Further Reading

Robins Evans blog can be found on the Waterscape website here, complete with comments;

www.waterscape.com/blog/authors/robin/commercial-property-income-and-the-waterways

Robins Evans full list of posts is here;

www.waterscape.com/blog/authors/robin/



Too late for some: Hartshill Yard sold to developers and lost to the canals as reported in NABO News last year

be spent on the waterways. If capital values drop, as they have done in recent years, it does not mean that revenues drop. In effect it is a 'paper' loss very similar to a drop in the value of a house. You may be poorer because you have less valuable assets but it doesn't affect the amount of income you have.

Joint Ventures

These are different because their purpose is to increase the capital value of our property by getting planning permission and then selling it on, or developing it and then selling. The difference is that some of the receipts from these sales are treated as revenue. In recent years, our joint ventures have been unable to sell enough property at a high enough price to generate the income we have been used to receiving. This has been the main cause of the reduction in property income and some of the pressures to reduce spend across all areas of BW. Joint ventures (JVs) are riskier than straight property investment but the rewards are potentially much higher. Over the last 10 years JVs have contributed £28m of revenue to BW and are forecast to make an

equally impressive contribution in the future. Their capital value has reduced in recent years alongside all other property but we expect much of this will return in the medium to long term.

Some facts and figures to end with:

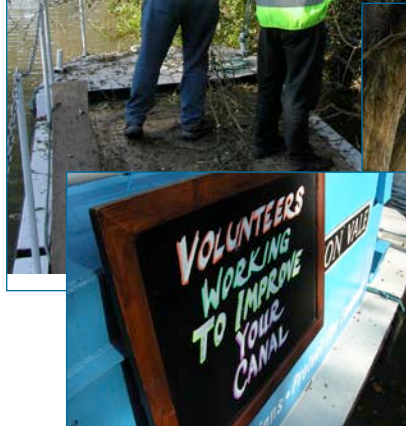
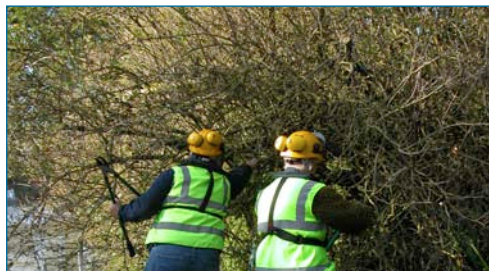
The average return from our property portfolio over the last 5 years has been 8.3% pa compared to the industry benchmark of 2.2%. The capital value of our property portfolio (including JVs) was £295m in 2001 and £465m in 2010.

Over the past 10 years JVs have contributed £28m of revenue to BW. Most of the land along the waterways has always been in private ownership, and BW only owns something like 3% of the land alongside the network. Where there are third party developments, our planners work with the developers and local authorities to get the best deal and design for the waterways. Last year BW was a statutory consultee to something like 2,500 third party planning applications and obtained commitments to approximately £1m in improvements to the network from neighbouring developers.

Have Your Say

Letters to the Editor

Opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as true.



The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust replies

Thank you for your 'Personal observations on the K & A' in the very excellent March 2011 NABO News. I fully realise that you faithfully reported what some of the folk you met on your trip had said, and I can only be really saddened by some of the remarks about the K & A Canal Trust.

We decided (with IWA's support) not to just sit back and throw bricks at BW, but rather to show some initiative during these difficult times. We therefore offered to set up a pilot Local Waterways Board, built around our existing Partnership Board. This has not been easy, as there were no clear ground rules, but we wanted to find a productive way forward. We have now had a series of constructive Board meetings, aimed at understanding the key issues facing the

waterways, sharing with BW how these could be addressed, and—where possible—helping to solve some of the problems.

Based on our initial experience, together with feedback from a well-supported stakeholders meeting, we have recently re-shaped the Board to give it a better balance in membership expertise. At the same time, the Canal Trust has deliberately been working closely with BW's local management—not, as is claimed in

your report, as some part of BW, but as a (very) 'critical friend'! And what else would one expect of us at this time—just to sit on the side-lines and criticise? Our members re-opened this waterway and we will not allow it to be closed again.

The comments about the Trust not getting stuck in are also dreadfully misinformed. Our working boat 'sitting on visitor moorings at Horton Bridge' is out at least two days a week, with Trust volunteers cutting back vegetation, and down at Bradford there are regular working parties tackling many impor-

tant tasks. Don't forget also that we have over 400 volunteers—every week—running Crofton and Claverton Pumping Stations, the museum, shop and archives in Devizes and our four trip boats. And who runs the Water Festivals in Reading and Newbury, among others?

These are difficult days for the Trust: like all charities, we are battling financially, but we are doing everything possible to ensure that we can continue to keep our lovely K & A in the shape it deserves. Criticism is so easy—real work requires serious commitment. I'd ask anyone who still feels that more could be being done, to come and join with us in this vital work.

Mike Rodd, Chair of the K&A Canal Trustees and long-term NABO member

Licence fee outrage

Simon Greer's comments might have a point. I don't know whether Council members feel they are getting bogged down with 'nick-picking' matters or not, but there does seem to be an emphasis on those rather than, say, licence costs. I moor in the winter on non-BW waters from October to March, so only need a 6-month licence, April to September. BW has just charged me 80% of the yearly cost for a six-month licence. This is outrageous. How can it be fair to charge me 80% when I only use BW waters for 50%. This, surely, is what NABO should be kicking up a huge fuss about and issues like this were one of the main reasons I joined. I cancelled my membership of IWA because I felt they were not fighting enough. Maybe the smaller matters do have to be dealt with, but don't forget the bigger picture.

Yours , David Kennedy, nb Liberty Bell

Re: 6-month licence going up by 50%. Our licence with prompt payment was £256.61 and is now £382.10—an increase of £125.49. With the increase in cost of fuel for the boat and the car, a 300-mile round trip to the boatyard, from Rye in East Sussex to Fenny Compton, means that our pension will not stretch that far; the bankers have made sure of that. Our boat Kesho is now up for sale.

Ern Lawrence

Change is not always for the better

I have just read the exchange of correspondence with Simon Greer regarding his distress, resistance to change and apparent abhorrence at defining anything. Wake up Simon, the world has moved on and unfortunately, in some cases, the attitude of our fellow man has not changed for the better.

There now seems to be a self-centred view among more of the community and boaters who seek to gain personal advantage at minimal cost and don't care about the effects or costs it places on their contemporaries. One example of this are the people who 'continuously moor' but call themselves 'continuous cruisers'. It is a sad but necessary reflection on society that the unspecified terms of 'additional period', 'reasonable' and 'circumstance' now have to be specifically defined. It is this lack of definition that is exploited by those amongst us who seek to gain advantage and abuse the spirit of the rules, and

it is becoming more prevalent. The report on the mooring strategy and the observations on the K & A illustrate this. The K & A appears to be a canal to rigorously avoid, the Rochdale in Manchester is more appealing.

I object to Simon using the term 'boaters'. I am a boater of many years and he does not represent my views. There would be no point to NABO if it took Simon's position; it would do nothing except resist any change, regardless, and I would no longer be a member. Following the subsequent missives of 12.1.2011, Richard had no choice but to hand the correspondence to Council for a collective response. Simon was starting to get rather unpleasant, attempting to imply that council members work for their own ends. I am quite sure that the vast majority of the 'impecunious boater' membership greatly appreciates the hard work of NABO and is not left 'cold'. That is after all why we are members.

I wholeheartedly support and agree with the response of Richard, Howard and David. There is a real chance to have some influence and it is indeed fortunate that NABO has a Council with the vision and ability needed to grasp this opportunity.

Take your head out of the bucket Simon and look around. Life and people, including boaters, have changed and not always what we would wish, but that's reality. Perhaps it is time for you to 'catch the other bus'.

Terry Loma, nb Break-Away, L&L Canal

One person's solution to 'overcrowding'

A controversial suggestion:

I would like to suggest that BW doesn't stand a chance to control boat numbers and moorings with their present set up. Overcrowding is becoming a real problem in some areas and BW needs a way of managing this. My solution would be to sell separate licences for each waterway or even part of a waterway (e.g. east and west K&A could be two licences). Boaters could either buy a licence for their current waterway or a visitor's licence. BW could then fix the number of permanent licences to be issued to avoid overcrowding, either using a licence auction or a waiting list. Visitors would be permitted by issuing either short-term visitor licences, as happens on the Thames, or a multi-canal licence, which would restrict the amount of time spent on each canal.

Sue Burchett